

Readers' cars MG SVR

MG's 'hero car' cost same as a Porsche!

MG MAY have had a reputation for building affordable, small and nippy sports cars but perhaps few realise that not so long ago it had a rather misjudged and ill-fated ambition to join the ranks of supercar makers.

The SV was designed to be a 'hero car' for the brand but the car began life as something quite different, an Italian sports car.

Originally it was a rather ungainly looking thing and a sales flop for the small scale manufacturer De Tomaso.

It was then taken over by the Qvale family, a well-known American specialist firm, which developed it further but again the car was not a commercial success. Perhaps going on the basis of third time lucky, in 2002 the project was bought in a surprise swoop by MG Rover which began turning it into a supercar. Renowned stylist Peter Stevens (of McLaren F1 fame) was hired to give the SV its strong and very distinctive looks and the result is certainly a lot better than anything the former Italian or American owners achieved.

Remarkably, those body panels are not just eye-catching, they were hand-made from carbon fibre. Today this light and strong material is quite widespread but then it was pretty much only found in racing cars.

The two seater, rear wheel drive coupe has two versions of a V8, one a 4.6 litre giving 320 bhp and another, for the SV-R

flagship, a 5.0 litre with a healthy 380 bhp and a top whack of around 175 mph. Perhaps optimistically, MG priced the car at £65,000 for the SV and £83,000 for the SV-R, pitching it against the likes of Porsche.

It wasn't a bad car at all but several analysts say the MG brand was not strong enough to command that sort of money and, just as with De Tomaso and Qvale, this car too was a commercial disaster.

Only a few dozen were built before the company collapsed and it is reckoned that MG lost £35,000 on each one...

However today they make fantastic classic cars and it is an SV-R which is now the pride and joy of Stan Aleksandrowicz, a member of the Potteries and South Cheshire MG Owners Club.

Stan, 66, said: "I first saw one when it was launched at the NEC but there was no way I could afford one. Then years later I saw one advertised in Bournemouth.

"My wife and I went down to see it but because it is only a two seater she could not come on my test drive with the owner. When I got back she said 'Do you want to go home and think about' but I replied 'Too late, I've put down a deposit on it!' I fell in love with it straight away. It is a



lovely car to drive, a real sports car. "It has so much power but it is balanced and handles really well too. Think of a big V8 TF and you'll have an idea." Stan agrees with many in saying that the SV was the wrong car for the struggling company at that time being "too little, too late" and probably the money and effort

spent on it would have been better used with more mainstream models. But that's in the past. What matters to Stan now is the enjoyment he gets from driving the beast and keeping alive another example of what was a British supercar even if ultimately it was a sales disaster. Maybe not third time lucky after all.

■ *If you have enjoyed this article and have an unusual or interesting car you would like featured here call John Swift on 01270 820011 or email him at john.swift@thesentinel.co.uk*



Top, reader Stan Aleksandrowicz with his MG SV-R. Above and left, publicity shots for the car, which cost £83,000 nearly 15 years ago.